

State Board Priorities

In August, 2006, Board members agreed to focus their efforts in 2007 on the following:

- ***Continued Support for Transforming the Services System.*** The Board's first priority is to focus on implementing the necessary culture change across the services system that emphasizes the holistic needs of individuals. In 2005-06, representatives of the services system, including consumers and advocates, were successful in gaining the overwhelming support of the Board, the Governor and General Assembly. Over \$194 million was appropriated for new and enhanced community services in the Commonwealth. In addition, construction money and planning dollars were appropriated for the rebuilding and replacement of two state mental health hospitals and two training centers for persons with mental retardation. The Board plans to continue to provide the policy and advocacy leadership needed to sustain support for continued expansion of community services and modernization and replacement of state facilities. Board members believe that it is critical that they provide leadership in educating state and community leaders about the Vision and the on-going needs of the services system. In addition, as noted in subsequent priorities, the Board believes that the success, cost effectiveness and continued need for support of prevention efforts needs to be articulated and communicated.
- ***Emphasizing the Role of the State Board as a Community Resource through Public Education on Transformation and Advocacy for Services Sustainability.*** In addition, to continuing the emphasis on transforming the services system, the Board plans to be very active in its role as educators of the public to overcome the stigma of seeking treatment or services, and to encourage communities, churches, volunteers and others to assist with the expansion of the community services system. The Board also plans to champion the success stories of the men and women who provide services in a variety of settings in both the public and private sectors. In addition, the Board plans to develop and seek opportunities to articulate the stories of people and their families who are in recovery, or who are succeeding in making their own choices for a person-centered and meaningful life.
- ***Fostering and Encouraging Interagency and Inter-board Relationships That Focus Holistically on Addressing the Needs of Individuals.*** The Board wants to foster partnerships among state and local agencies, consumer and family organizations, and across all levels of state government to address the health care and behavioral health care needs of individuals. This includes the need to expand housing options, the need for meaningful work, and the need for adequate choices for living and participating fully in community life.

In addition to working with the citizen boards of the health and human resources agencies, the State Board plans to explore opportunities to work with the Boards

of Education, Criminal Justice Services, Corrections, and other agencies throughout state government to determine opportunities for joint policy development, collaboration, and advocacy. The Board strives to find opportunities to work with the academic medical centers and university and community college programs to integrate services and to encourage involvement in the mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system.

- ***Supporting Efforts to Improve Workforce Development, Recruitment and Retention, and High Performance.*** The Integrated Strategic Plan endorsed by the Board in January, 2006, states that a critical success factor for achieving the Vision is “a competent and well-trained ...workforce [that] provides needed services and supports.” The Board plans to work with the Department and the CSBs in efforts to educate, expand, and motivate the workforce toward achievement of the Vision. The Commonwealth enjoys the benefit of having dedicated, highly qualified and motivated professionals working in the public and private sectors. However, the demands of 24-hour, seven days per week service provision and the shortages of health care professionals cause stress and burn-out. Young adults are choosing to enter other fields of endeavor. The Department is working with the public and private sectors, and colleges, universities and community colleges to find ways to motivate and encourage the workforce, as well as to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals. The Board plans to support and encourage these efforts, as well as supporting the Department’s efforts to become a high performance organization.
- ***Encouraging Integrated Treatment and Prevention.*** The Integrated Strategic Plan calls for actions to restructure the existing services system to provide integrated treatment for individuals, particularly those with co-occurring diagnoses of mental illnesses and substance use disorders, and people with mental illness and mental retardation. In addition, state and federal resources are needed to help strengthen families and to intervene early with children to prevent disabling conditions. The Prevention and Promotion Advisory Council (PPAC), whose members are appointed by the State Board and who advise the State Board, met with the Board in May, 2006. The PPAC advised the Board that much more can be done to implement evidence-based practices that support children and families in their homes, schools and communities. The scarcity of resources directed toward prevention efforts severely inhibits the expansion and development of high-quality prevention programs. In addition, suicide among youth and older adults must be addressed. The Board plans to prioritize prevention efforts and support advocacy for expanding the services and increasing the number of providers.